Serm
Tenth

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

CONVOCATION

OF THE

Bishops and Clergy

OF THE

Province of *Canterbury* at *Westminster*, *Novemb.* the 18*th.* 1689.

By *WILLIAM BEVERIDGE*, Archdeacon of *Colchester*.

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Made *English* by *J. G.* a Member of the Church of *England*.

Let ancient Customs still take place. Syn. Nic. Can. 6.

Licens'd and Entred.

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Dr. BEVERIDGE's SERMON

Before the

CONVOCATION ENGLISHED.

Serm
Tenth

TO THE

AUTHOR.

Reverend Sir,

PERUSING *your Learned Discourse, lately Preached before the Sacred Synod, and finding in it such admirable Matter, so harmoniously handled, and so suitable to this present Age, wherein the best Church, and Religion in the World wou'd be in great danger of being Crucified, like their blessed Author, were they not maintain'd, and defended by such Props, as You, I thought 'twou'd*

 not

not be amiſs to render it into Engliſh *for the benefit of thoſe, who underſtand not the* Latin *Tongue, and being well aſſur'd, 'twou'd be very acceptable to the* Engliſh *Reader, as coming from You, whoſe known Candour, and Sweetneſs of temper (I doubt not) will pardon my preſumption in this Attempt, which I fear, has not eſcaped the too common fate of all ſuch ſublime, and excellent Subjects, which is, to be foul'd, and ſullied by ill Verſion. However ſuch as it is, it's humbly preſented by him, who is*

SIR,

Your moſt devoted Servant,

J. G.

Serm Tenth

A

SERMON

Before the

CONVOCATION, &c.

1 Cor. XI. 16.

But if any Man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.

WITH what, and how great Controversies the Church of *England* now a-days is exercised, and with how potent, and likewise malicious Enemies surrounded, we all indeed see and grievously resent; but no wonder, considering we are well assured, that this has been almost the constant, and perpetual fate of Christ's Church, wheresoever constituted. For if we peruse

all the Eccleſiaſtick Hiſtories, derived down to us from the very times of the Apoſtles, we ſhall find no Age, wherein the Catholick Church has not been moleſted, either by Hereticks, or Schiſmaticks, or both together. That is to ſay, Tares are ſown by the Enemy near the Wheat in the Lord's ground, and they'll grow together till the harveſt. But truly ſuch is the love of our God to his Ground, ſuch the benevolence of the Almighty towards his Church, that he'le ne're permit the Wheat to be ſuffocated by the Tares, the Evangelical Doctrine by Hereſy, and Diſcipline by Schiſm. And therefore we have no reaſon to fear our Church's ſuſtaining ſo many Aſſaults of its Adverſaries, ſeeing 'tis buoy'd up by an omnipotent God, as a pure, and ſound Member of his Univerſal Church. But truly the purer, and ſounder our Church is, and therefore more acceptable to God, the more, and fiercer Enemies it has among Men, who from one ſide to t'other ſet themſelves wholly againſt it, and if they can't deſtroy, at leaſt Endeavour to diſturb it. For on the one hand Popiſh Prieſts, on the other Sectaries traduce, ſlander, and wound it in their words, and actions; they try all ways to obtrude their new Fangles and Ceremonies on us, and that ſo they may either utterly pull down, or corrupt our Church.

But we in the mean while relying on Divine aſſiſtance, fly to God alone, daily beſeeching him in the name of his only begotten Son, that he wou'd vouchſafe to defend, and maintain a Church of his own.

own making. And he has been ſo propicious to our Prayers, contrary to our Deſerts, in wonderfully delivering Us at leaſt from one ſort of our Adverſaries, to wit, the Popiſh Recuſants, and has given us reaſon to hope, that they'l ne're be capacitated again to moleſt our Church.

But even now one part remains, who tho' ſeemingly of the ſame Faith, and Doctrin, yet being ſeduced either by Ignorance, or Error, or peradventure ſome ſcruple of Conſcience, alledge I know not what crimes againſt the Diſcipline, and Rites of our Church, and for that reaſon refuſe Communion with us in God's Worſhip. And 'tis ſtrange, how great miſchiefs may ariſe from this apparently ſmall beginning? For hence it is that Altars are erected againſt Altars; hence proceed Factious Tumults, and Mutual Hatreds among Brethren; hence 'tis that God's Worſhip is neglected, and the very Sacraments, one being thruſt into corners, the other ſeldom celebrated; hence it is, I am amaz'd to ſpeak, that impious words are raſhly ſpoken againſt God, and againſt all Religion, as if it rather did afford matter for Diſcord, than Peace; hence laſtly thoſe popular calamities, which threaten both Church, and State, and thereupon perpetually diſquiet both.

Now that ſome remedy at length may be opportunely apply'd even to theſe diſeaſes, His moſt Serene Majeſty has been pleaſed, doubtleſs by Divine inſpiration, to aſſemble the Biſhops, and whole Clergy of this Kingdom, that they may conſult by what

methods these pernicious differences may at last be so composed, our Church loosing nothing of its Purity, and Glory, nothing of its Authority, and Right, that they who dissent from us, may be reduced to our Holy Communion, or at least remain for ever destitute of all reasons, I don't say just, which they never had, but of all specious colours, which hitherto they have pretended for their Separation.

I confess, that this is a great, and very difficult undertaking, but as pious as necessary, and therefore worthy of the utmost endeavours of our Clergy. And how great soever the Labour and Work may seem, although not less than to strive against the Stream, yet we must not despair, if so that God be present, and influence our undertakings? And indeed we have so often experienced his singular Providence in defending our Church, that we have no reason to doubt, but that He will be present and propitious to our Importunities for it; whilst all things are directed according to His Divine Will reveal'd to us in Holy Writ: Which both we and our Dissenting Brethren hold to be the Supream Rule, whereby all Ecclesiastical Controversies are to be judg'd.

Now if we consult these Sacred Oracles, we shall find all things in them necessary for the obtaining Eternal Salvation. But not so many things touching the external Polity of the Church, much less particular Rites necessarily requisite for it: For truly God has left these to be us'd in every particular Church, according to those general Rules he has deliver'd

deliver'd in the Holy Scriptures for that purpose: Such are, Let all things be done decently, and in order; Let all things be done for Edification: And others of the like nature, with which the usual Rites of our Church exactly agree. But what if a Contention shou'd arise between two Provincial Churches, or between divers Members of the same Province concerning any Ceremony, have we no Precept nor Example in the Holy Scriptures to stifle it? 'Tis true, we have an Example, which shou'd indeed have the force of a Precept, in as much as 'tis prescrib'd by the Holy Spirit of God; and upon this account committed to Sacred Writ, that it might be observ'd by all. But lest I shou'd seem to speak this for nothing, I think 'twill not be amiss to explain briefly that of the Apostle, which we just now cited; especially since nothing can be of greater use, and more necessary to be observ'd in all such Controversies as are to be decided by this Sacred Synod.

Therefore in the first place you are to take notice, That there were among the Disturbers of the *Corinthian* Church newly setled, those who held it decent for Men to be conversant in Publick Meetings, with their Heads cover'd, but Women uncover'd: Now the Apostle in this Chapter, from the First to the Sixteenth Verse, copiously reasons against this Custom, which some at that time began to introduce; and shews that the contrary ought to be observ'd every where. He argues first from Divine Testimony, not indeed directly, but by implication, for as much

as

as it appears from the Word of God, that Man is the Image and Glory of God, and the Head of the Woman, but the Woman the Glory of the Man, made of Him and for Him. The Apostle largely handles this Argument to the Twelfth Verse, and then takes another from the Law of Nature, and the common Customs of Men. *Judge in your selves* says he, *is it comely that a Woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you?* &c.

But in the last place, he produces his clearest Argument compris'd in these words, *But if any Man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.*

Which is the same as if he had said, But if any Man is so contentious, as notwithstanding these Reasons, still to contend, that 'tis lawful for a Man even cover'd, but a Woman uncover'd, publickly to pray unto God; yet there's one Argument behind, by which both he and all Christians must of necessity confess themselves convicted, which is this, *That we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God*: Now amongst us and all other Churches, the quite contrary Custom hath obtain'd, whereby Men are taught to uncover, but Women to cover their Heads when they join in the Service of God.

I know that these words of the Apostle are interpreted a little otherwise by some: as if he affirm'd thus, (*viz.*) That neither they nor the Churches of God have such a Custom, to contend about

about Matters of this nature. But besides that, admitting this Exposition, the Apostle wou'd contradict himself, because in this very place he sharply disputes with the *Corinthians:* Again, if we shou'd grant, that the Words may be thus expounded, it equally makes for our side; because 'tis evident, even from this very sense of the words, as well as the other, which is the true and genuine, and so conspicuous and manifest, that it requires no further explication, that the Apostle disputing concerning an Ecclesiastick Ceremony with the *Corinthian* Church, appeals to the Custom of the other Churches of God. Nevertheless, this one thing we may note, That these words, οὐδὲ αἱ Ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ are read in some *Greek* Manuscripts in the singular Number, οὐδὲ ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, as the *Syrian* Interpreter has it: Which are also the words of the Vulgar *Latin* Version; and the same is to be seen in St. *Cyprian*, and other *Latin* Fathers. But the sense is all one. For αἱ Ἐκκλησίαι, in the plural, tho indefinitely put, signify all the Churches of which the Universal consists. Therefore both ways, recourse is had here to the Universal Church, and the Argument is drawn from her Custom. For this reason St. *Theodoret* says of it, ἱκανὸς οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἐλέγχαι καὶ τοὺς λίαν ἐριστικούς. This Argument is sufficient to confute even the most contentious; For the Apostle shews, That not only he, but all the Churches of God think the same: So that he that acts contrary, opposes

πάσῃ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, the Universal Church, as *Theophylact*, and before him St. *Chrysostom*, comments upon the place.

These Words of the Apostle being thus concisely explain'd, fore-shew a plain and safe way to us, by which we may proceed in the determination of all such Cases. But if any Rite us'd by some Provincial Church, is controverted, we must make a diligent Enquiry into the Sentiments of all other Churches, and see whether the same has been approv'd by them. For the illustration whereof, we must observe, That in all Ages even from our Saviour's Passion, several Provincial Churches have been constituted in the greatest part of the World; which all together make that one Church, which we therefore commonly call Catholick or Universal. Which doubtless, must be computed from all the Churches, not only those that exist at one and the same point of time, but that ever had a being.

Moreover, all these in all Ages, and at all times, have agreed with the Church in necessary Articles of Faith. Now as to the Rites, they have been partly proper, and peculiar to particular Churches, partly common to all. Rites that are proper to one or two Churches, may be abrogated, or retain'd by the same, or admitted by others at pleasure. For they put on the nature of things

things indifferent, and therefore are of no force, unless what they receiv'd from that Church by whose Authority they are establish'd. But Rites that have been always common to the Universal Church, that is, to all Churches throughout all Ages, or which is all one, to the greatest part of them, the very same ought still to be observ'd by every particular Church. For neither is it in the power of every particular Church, either to reject Rites when observ'd, or observe them when rejected by the Universal Church. If any of these shall do either of the two, 'tis Schismatical, disjoining it self from the Body of Christ, at least in that particular. But that every Church may be rightly constituted, so as to be made a sound Member of the Catholick, 'tis absolutely necessary for her to conform her self to that in all things, as long as it may be done, and religiously embrace her Discipline and Rites, as well as her Doctrin. Which, lest I may seem to speak without reason, I'le confirm with the following Arguments.

These very Words of my Text supply us with one. For certainly the *Corinthian* was a Provincial Church, into which some endeavour'd to bring new Rites. The Apostle being ascertain'd of this, disputes against it in this place; and proves that that Church cou'd by no means admit of it. And his last and chief Argument he draws from the Cus-

tom of the Universal Church, as we observ'd before: Forasmuch as all other Churches should have no such, but a quite contrary Custom. *But if any man*, says he, *seem to be contentious, we have no such custom; neither the Churches of God.* From which words I thus argue:

What's contrary to the receiv'd Custom of all the Churches, ought not to be admitted by the *Corinthian.*

But this is contrary to the receiv'd Custom of all the Churches.

Ergo.

Now if the Church of *Corinth*, was not oblig'd to accommodate her self to, and observe the Rites of all the other Churches, this Argument of the Apostle would be of no weight. For by this supposition, that Church might have admitted that Rite, notwithstanding 'twas contrary to a Custom Universally receiv'd: And therefore the major proposition wou'd be false. But undoubtedly the Apostle argued rightly, being divinely inspired when he penn'd these Words: Which is a cogent reason, because he could not deceive by the Argument, nor be deceiv'd in the manner of arguing. And therefore a principal reason obliges every such Provincial Church, as the *Corinthian* was, diligently to observe the Rites of the Universal. For if any neglect the observance of them, he is by this infallible Argument, convinc'd of a grievous *Error* and *Schism.* Neither is it possible for him to defend himself by any Pretence:

tence: ſince God himſelf dictated this Argument to the Apoſtle, and from thence it neceſſarily follows, That 'tis the Will of God that every Provincial Church ſhould conform to the Univerſal: And alſo that we always uſe this way of arguing which he has taught us, to determine all Controverſies of the like nature.

Moreover, the ſame appears from the very nature and notion of a Church: For the Church generally ſo called, is a vaſt Society, or Congregation of Men profeſſing the Chriſtian Faith in all parts of the World: Whereof all Provincial Churches are ſo many Parts or Members. Now in all ſuch Societies every Part ought to agree with its whole: And conſequently the leſſer with the greater.

Reaſon tells us this; The Law of nature commands it; and the Univerſal conſent of Mankind judges it neceſſary. So that, if any thing enacted by the greater, obliges the remaining part, much more what is ordain'd by the greateſt part of each Society; which it ought to obſerve if it wou'd continue a member, and enjoy the Priviledges of the ſame Society. Which rule, ſince it prevails in all manner of Societies, ought much more in the Church; which of all things ſhould be the moſt Regular.

Accordingly Chriſt himſelf is the head of this Church, called Univerſal, who equally diffuſes his Spirit

Spirit thro' all its parts. The Apostle in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, and elsewhere in many places explains this idea, or notion of the Church. Seeing therefore the Spirit of Christ himself is diffused thro' all the Members of this Body; and both guides, and governs them, whatsoever is performed by these Members let it be (as it ought) ascrib'd to his Holy Spirit. For althô each Member is able perhaps to suffer some humane affliction, which yet all have done conjointly at all times, it cou'd scarcely proceed from any thing less than a common (if I may so say) Principle of all things, namely, the Spirit of God which generally actuates all things. And therefore it can't but be necessary to be still observ'd (as much as may be) by every Member.

The next Argument on this occasion is fetcht from the Apostolical Institution of all such Rites, which are observed by the Universal Church. For whatsoever the Apostles in the first institution of the Churches delivered for their observation, is undoubtedly necessary to their legitimate constitution. For otherwise they must have appointed something superfluous, which can't be alledg'd against the Apostles, considering that they have instituted nothing in the Church, but what was enjoyn'd them by Heaven.

Which since all Christians believe, they agree in nothing more, than that the Apostolical Institution of

of the Churches is a Rule, and Measure, according to which every present Church is to be model'd. So that no Constitution of any Church can be accounted Legitimate, unless it be consonant thereto. Now this being granted, it follows that no particular Church is lawfully constituted, unless it observes all the Rites of the Universal. For whatsoever she hath observed in all ages, must be of Apostolical Institution. For how is it possible for any one to imagine, that all the Churches dispersed over the face of the Earth shou'd every where use the same modes, unless they received them together with their Faith by Apostolick Tradition?

'Tis very clear, that the Apostles went about almost all Parts, and appointed Churches, where ever they came: 'Tis clear that they were conducted by the same Spirit: And lastly 'tis clear, that they endeavour'd Uniformity in all Churches. And therefore 'tis no wonder, if they have every where ordained the same Rites: 'Twou'd have rather been a wonder, if they had done otherwise. Now if such general Rites were not by Apostolick appointment, how cou'd they every where come into Chucrhes so far distant from each others? Cou'd they from General Councils? For that indeed remains to be spoken to. For they must of necessity either be ordained by the Apostles, or by Oecumenical Councils, as Saint *Augustin* observes in his Epistle to *Januarius*, wherein he says, *We preserve things not written, but delivered*,

delivered, which are indeed observ'd all the World over; whereby we may understand, that things recommended, and decreed either by the Apostles, or General Councils, (whose authority the Church venerates) are retain'd. Now we in this place speak only of such Rites, as were observ'd by the Universal Church before General Councils had their being, and which for this reason cou'd not be instituted by them. It remains therefore, that we attribute them only to Apostolical Institution, according to that common rule of the same Learned Father, who says, *That the Universal Church holds not what's instituted by Councils, but always retain'd, which being deliver'd only by Apostolical Authority, is truly believed.*

Therefore since 'tis necessary to legitimate the Constitution of every Church, that the Rites instituted by the Apostles be retain'd: And since all the Rites of the Universal are appointed by the Apostles themselves, none can doubt, but that the observing the same is necessarily requir'd to the Legal Constitution of every particular Church.

And this indeed is not my private Opinion, but is, and ever was the common Sentiment of all Christians, especially the Primitive. This appears from hence, that in times past, if any Controversy arose concerning any Ecclesiastical Rite, which some peculiar Church had receiv'd, 'twas always customary to enquire into the Practice of the Universal; and her constant usage touching that Rite, and afterwards to give in their Verdict.

Examples

Examples are very obvious, how ever I'le chuſe one for the preſent. The Primitive Church, you all know, was long perplex'd with a grievous Contention concerning the time of the celebration of the Paſsover. For the Church of *Aſia* contended with the *Jews*, that 'twas to be celebrated on the fourteenth day after the appearance of the Moon, let it fall on whatſoever Holy-day of the Week it would. Now all other Churches were wont to faſt, and celebrate that Feaſt only on the day of our Lord's Reſurrection. This controverſie continued for many Years, till at length 'twas complain'd of in the general Council held at *Nice*. Where 'twas prov'd, that all other Churches, except that of *Aſia*, us'd to celebrate that Feaſt on the Lord's day, and for that reaſon all the Fathers, that were preſent at that Synod, thought it fit, and reaſonable, for the *Aſian* Church to celebrate it on the ſame day: As the great Emperor, *Conſtantine*, expreſly aſſerts in an Epiſtle to the Churches by whoſe command that Synod was ſummon'd. From whence it appears that the *Nicene* Fathers us'd the ſame arguments againſt the *Aſian* Church, that the Apoſtle do's againſt the *Corinthian*, which he deduces from the Cuſtom of all the other Churches. Alſo St. *Cyprian* has the ſame againſt *Novatian*, and St. *Auguſtin* againſt the Donatiſts: But *Epiphanius* brings it againſt all Hereticks, and likewiſe Schiſmaticks, condemning them all of Hereſie, that either in Doctrine or Diſcipline Apoſta-

tize from the Univerſal Church. I might ſeem too prolix, and tedious, if I ſhould but point out all the Councils, and Fathers, that have us'd this argument; and therefore our Propoſition may well be inferr'd from them. For this Argument, which the Catholick Church has always us'd, takes for granted, that 'tis at leaſt juſt, and rational, that all her rites ſhou'd be every where retain'd.

Upon which account we have more largely proſecuted this ſubject, becauſe hereby we may the better, when occaſion ſerves, repreſs all the adverſaries of our Church; even the *Romaniſts* themſelves, who aſſuming the Name of Catholicks, do inſolently Glory in it. For the *Romiſh* Church whoſe Faith, and Cuſtoms all Papiſts are ſolemnly engag'd to maintain, hath invented ſo many new Tenets, and lately innovated ſo many ſuperſtitious Ceremonies, either rejected, or unknown to the Univerſal, and is at this day ſo imperious in her commands, that ſhe only deſerves the name of a moſt corrupted, much leſs Catholick Church. For ſhe has nothing common with the Catholick, nothing with all other Churches, but rather all things Diſſentaneous, and Repugnant, excepting, wherein ſhe agrees with ours.

But omitting theſe things, as not pertinent to this place, let's rather advance thoſe things which we have hitherto diſcours'd, that we may the

the better accompliſh the Buſineſs in hand.

Now then 'tis apparent from what we have already premis'd, how expedient it is, that Ancient Rites and Manners obſerv'd hitherto by the Univerſal, that the ſame ſhould alſo now be obſerv'd by every particular Church. Juſt ſo 'tis even in Bodies Politick. As for inſtance, in this very Kingdom there are divers Corporations, Burroughs, and other inferiour Fraternities, all which are impower'd to give Laws to themſelves, and to their Members; Provided always, they neither do, nor enact any thing *Contrary to the Statutes of this Realm, or* (as we ſay) *to the Common Law, or any ancient Cuſtom, that has been introduc'd, and receiv'd in this Kingdom time out of mind, and ſo has obtain'd the force of a Law.* Almoſt after the ſame manner 'tis with the Univerſal Church, which is the Kingdom of Chriſt. For this has it's Decrees written in the Word of God; and alſo has as it were a Common Law conſiſting of ſome certain Rites. Which tho' they be not expreſly, and in juſt ſo many words, commanded in the ſaid Decrees, yet are ſo adapted (if I may ſo ſay) to the general deſign and purport of them, and ſo uſeful for the Propagation, and Eſtabliſhment of that Religion, which is inſtituted there, that they have been obſerv'd at all times, and every where throughout the whole Chriſtian World, and for that reaſon are ſtill to be obſerv'd by all Churches, that are deſirous of holding

a firm Union, and Communion with the Universal. For if any Church shall abolish any one of these Rites, or constitute any thing contrary to them, the same will thereby be depriv'd of that Custom, which all the other Churches of God enjoy. Which thing indeed the Apostle charges the *Corinthians* with as a fault. And deservedly too. Because it can't possibly be deem'd a lesser Crime to disannul the common Rites of the Universal Church, than to violate the Common Law of the Realm. That this is great, 'tis generally acknowledg'd, and some to their own Cost have found it so. But perhaps some will judge me guilty of a fault, in pleading hitherto for Rites, and not shewing what they are, or how to know them. But truly this don't belong to me, who have hitherto design'd nothing more, than to demonstrate, how just, and equitable it is, that (for instance) our, or any other Provincial Church, shou'd religiously observe all such Rites, which, 'tis certain, all other Churches have observ'd: Now what peculiar Rites ought to be rank'd here, and from whence that appears, I leave undecided to your Judgments. Perchance some of them will be debated here before you: For that reason I've forbore mentioning the least of them in this place, for fear I shou'd seem to anticipate your more discerning Judgments in these Affairs. But there are some general Institutions of the Universal Church, which (if I mistake not) are indisputable, and yet seem momentous to the determining such

cases

caſes as will be laid open, in this Sacred Synod: Therefore I can't quite paſs them by, leſt I ſhou'd ſeem to fall ſhort of performing the duty laid on me.

Firſt, Therefore all the Churches of God have this Cuſtom, and always had, that in whatſoever Province they are plac'd, the Biſhops, and Paſtors of that Province, as often as occaſion requires, and opportunity permits may ſummon Synods or Conventions to deliberate, and conſult about affairs relating to the Church in the ſame Province. Which Synods therefore are call'd Convocations, or Provincial Councils. This ſufficiently appears from thoſe huge and numerous volumes of Councils, in which you may ſee ſeveral ſuch like Councils held in all Ages, and all Provinces over the whole Chriſtian world. And far more, doubtleſs, are celebrated, that are neither extant there, nor in any other place at preſent. Which, I thought fit to note here, that any one may plainly ſee, that this our Synodical Convocation is no Innovation. Becauſe nothing was ever more uſual in all the Churches of God than the celebration of ſuch Provincial Councils.

Add to this, that all Churches every where ſo Synodically congregated, were always us'd to create ſuch Canons, or Eccleſiaſtick Laws, as they judg'd to be Expedient for the better adminiſtration of the

the publick Worſhip of God, his Word and Sacraments, and the Diſcipline of the whole Church. This alſo abundantly appears from the ſaid Acts of Councils: In which there are divers Canons ſet forth by every Provincial Church, as proper, and peculiar to itſelf. For tho' all the common Churches of God have ſcrupulouſly retain'd the rites of the Univerſal; yet they were always forc'd to add others to the Canons of the Church, that were adapted to the form and modes of that Kingdom or Province wherein each Church was ſituated: Otherwiſe it were almoſt impoſſible for any Provincial or National Church to ſubſiſt long in Peace. From hence alſo a common Cuſtom has obtain'd in all the Churches of God, when all ſuch Canons, and Laws are Conſtituted, to have regard not only to the well-being of any private member, but alſo to the Peace, and Tranquillity of the whole Church. And indeed many things are neceſſary to the procuring this that are not to our obtaining everlaſting felicity. For which reaſon almoſt all the Canons, publiſhed hitherto by Provincial, or General Councils are inſtituted only for ſuch things, that make for the external Diſcipline, and Peace of the Church. And hence 'tis alſo, that never any Church was extant, which did not regiſter ſeveral things amongſt their Laws, not againſt, but beſides thoſe things, which are contain'd in holy Writ. Which is ſo clear, and perſpicuous, that I can't enough wonder, how any one can doubt of the truth thereof.

Beſides

Besides 'tis customary in all the Churches of God to ratify such Canons, as they make, with Ecclesiastick Penances, to prevent impunity, when they are violated. This likewise appears from the Canons of all the Councils, upon which a man can scarce cast his eye, but presently at the first sight see Suspension, or Deposition, Anathema, or Excommunication against Lay-men, if they shall act otherwise. For neither has the Church ever esteem'd those worthy of the Sacred Ministry, nor these of her Communion, who refuse to obey Laws written as well for theirs, as its own advantage.

Further 'tis evident out of the aforesaid Collection of Councils, that all the Churches of God were wont so to frame, and temper these Laws, which they thought necessary for themselves, that they might be advantageous to, and edifying of the whole Community, and as much as possible, inoffensive. I said, as much as possible, by reason their ignorance is such, that they scarce are sensible of any thing: Such is the perverseness of others, that they wrest all to the worst sense. And truly 'tis hardly possible for any Civil Law, much less Ecclesiastical, to be so made, as to be approv'd by all. Therefore there's no reason, that the Church shou'd be sollicitous for this sort of men, unless perhaps, that they may be better taught in discipline and manners by the force of the Laws. Again, others there are, who endeavour to serve God piously,

and

and devoutly, and to direct their lives according to his Commands, and yet are of so weak, and Scrupulous a Conscience, that nothing almost can be done, that do's not prove offensive to them, and that too (as we should charitably believe) not from an obstinacy of will, or stiff inclination to any Faction; but from some pious, tho' groundless fear, lest it shou'd be displeasing to God. And truly these men are to be taken into consideration before Laws are confirm'd, especially Ecclesiastick, lest , instead of eradicating old Scruples, we shou'd implant new ones in their minds. And that also, whether they, who are thus troubl'd in conscience, wait on God's Altar together with the Church, or separately from it. For both are to be taken care of; these, that they may persevere in the Communion of our Church, the other, that they may be brought back to it. And certainly this is a work, and labour, deserving the cares and studies of us all. Which nevertheless is to be so enterpriz'd that nothing, for their sakes, may be omitted, that shall redound to the Interest of the Church, nor admitted, that shall prove detrimental to the same. For neither reason nor the perpetual Custom of the Church suffers a part to be preferable to the whole.

We may add further , That nothing has been more usual amongst the Churches of God, than to change Laws, that they've made , to abrogate ancient

ancient ones, and to ſubſtitute others, perhaps quite different, in their room, when a neceſſitous time requires it. None converſant in Eccleſiaſtick Hiſtories can be ignorant of this. For you can find no Church throughout the World, that has all the ſame Laws now, which it formerly had. Doubtleſs, all ſuch Laws of Provincial Churches, whereof we now ſpeak, are conſtituted *pro hic & nunc*, (if I may be allow'd to ſpeak barbarouſly here) that is, with reſpect to time, and place. When theſe are chang'd, the Laws of Neceſſity muſt be chang'd for their accommodation to the preſent Cuſtoms of every Age and Place. But truly no Church ever did, or muſt do this without cogent Neceſſity. For every unneceſſary alteration in Eccleſiaſtick Laws, ſtigmatizes the Church with inconſtancy; and too much derogates from the Authority given it by our Bleſſed Saviour; it makes Prophane Wretches call Religion into Queſtion, whether or no it depends on the Will of Man? It ſets ſeveral together by the ears; and keeps more ſtill in a dubious expectation of ſome new attempt: It renders the minds of others doubtful, and uncertain what to do: It ſtirs up outragious Tumults, often diſturbing the Publick Peace. Neither alſo is any one ſo Skilful in the diſpoſal, and proviſion of things, as to be able to foreſee by any Art, what, and how great Miſeries may be ariſing even from the

mutation of Laws incommodious. And therefore the changing of inveterate Laws for others, is at all times dangerous, unless such Necessity may compel, as is otherwise insuperable, and which is so manifest and apparent to the Eyes of all, that none may see a change, without seeing great Reason, and Necessity for it. Now if there be such a Necessity, all those Calamities will be averted, that generally attend an unnecessary change. Our Church will not lose a drachm of Honour or Esteem, that's due to her. For she, and her Authority will be the same. And all things will appear more peaceable, calm, fix'd, and quiet in her, than if they had kept their former State. All the Churches of God are taught this by Experience: And for this reason they never Scruple to abdicate Laws of their own Constitution, and to Confirm new ones, as often as they see occasion.

Now whether our Church be oblig'd by such a Necessity to alter any thing that's setled by her Laws, belongs to Wise Men, not me, to determine. This only I'le presume to say, that, if it be necessary, to bring back wandring Sheep to Christ's Fold, if necessary, to remove Scruples from the Consciences of weak Brethren: If necessary to extinguish Hatred, mitigate Anger, and reconcile all Differences, as far as possible about Religion: If necessary to restore Ecclesiastick Discipline to its pristine

ſtine vigour: If neceſſary to defend, and maintain the beſt Church on Earth againſt the Efforts of Men, and Devils: I ſay, If any one thinks theſe neceſſary, certainly he muſt likewiſe think it neceſſary to admit of ſuch Alterations as in his Opinion are moſt conducive to this purpoſe: Whilſt only theſe things are chang'd, which our Church has conſtituted by her Authority, not thoſe, which the Univerſal Church has Eſtabliſh'd by her Common Law. For all the Churches of God, and ours too, have always religiouſly forborn, (let the pretence be what it will) the leaſt Alteration in theſe Laws. For to aboliſh, or reject what has been always, and every where obſerv'd, is not only to change an Eccleſiaſtick Rite, but alſo the Church it ſelf, and render it different from all the Churches of God. Which yet never cou'd, nor, I hope, ever will be ſaid of our Church,

For truly ſuch was the care, and diligence of our Reformers, (whoſe happy memory we can never ſufficiently extol, and reverence) ſuch their Piety and Religion, ſuch their divinely inſpir'd Prudence, that, thinking it as neceſſary to keep firm Communion with the Catholick, as to recede from the *Roman* Church, renouncing all her Superſtitious Innovations, they themſelves religiouſly preſerv'd whatever had been approv'd by all the Churches of God; and ſo ordain'd it in our Church, the moſt illuſtrious Image and Reſem-

blance of the Catholick. And hence 'tis that our Church has always been the envy of the *Roman*: But so great an honour to all the Reform'd Churches, that I don't doubt, but that they wou'd imitate her pious Examples, were it in their power: So that we must not impute it to them, but to the necessities of time, and place, that they are not in all things agreeable to us.

Since therefore God has committed such a Church to our care; and since his Vicegerent here has now given us an opportunity to prosecute all things, that may tend to the peace, and advantage of his Church, let us employ all our powers and faculties for its accomplishment. Let us leave no means unattempted, to make all English-men to be of the Church of *England*. Let us endeavour all we can, to make her Faith, her Worship, and her Discipline, if possible, the wonder of the whole world, and she her self perpetual, by whose guidance we of this Kingdom may obtain everlasting Salvation thro' Christ, till his second coming. That all posterity may laud, and magnifie our God for moving so religious a Prince to assemble this Sacred Synod, and assigning such a preparation for it to the advantage of this our Church. If this Convocation shall be so pleas'd, to whose disposal all things are left. But whilst we are considering of these things, we call to mind the ancient Customs observ'd

ſerv'd by all God's Churches, in the calm and ſedate Celebration of their Synods: And let ours take example by that. Let us throw off all prejudiced Opinions, preſumptuous Suſpitions, and litigious Contentions, which only confound and diſturb ſuch Sacred Councils. But let all be done with that agreement, and conſent, as becomes Chriſtians, Clergy-men, and more eſpecially all us of the Church of *England*, when we conſult about the Eſtabliſhment of her Peace. Whatſoever we do, let it be done by univerſal Approbation, That in this we may truly ſay with the Apoſtle, *If any man ſeem to be contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom, neither the Churches of God.*

But whatſoever pains we take for the good of our Church they'l avail not, unleſs adorn'd with good works: Wherefore moſt Reverend Fathers in Chriſt, and dearly beloved Brethren give me leave to beſeech you in the name of Chriſt, ſo to comport your ſelves, as Becomes Fathers, and Sons of ſo holy a Church: *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father in Heaven?* Let all ſee and admire the eminent Sanctity of the Church of *England* in producing men moſt holy. By this means we ſhall engage not only men, but God to be of our ſide. Who alone is able to defend, and for ever preſerve a Church firſt of his own building, and then reſtoration, from all the Machinations of its enemies.

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Let God therefore arise, and his enemies be scatter'd. God grant that our Church may flourish and increase daily more and more. God grant that the Gates of Hell may ne're prevail against it. Lastly God grant, that his most holy Spirit may guide this Sacred Synod assembled in his name, and lead them into all truth, that whatsoever they do, may end in the glory of God, the good and settlement of the Universal Church, and more especially, this of England, *through our* Lord *Jesus Christ, to whom with the* Father, *and holy Spirit be ascrib'd all glory, and honour now and evermore,* Amen.

F I N I S.
